RESEARCH PLAN PROPOSAL

Trauma and Human Suffering: A Study of Select Partition Narratives

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Tentative Title

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Research Problem

India's freedom from colonial rule has forever been marked by the agony of Partition. Partition of Indian subcontinent like the French Revolution (1787-1799), the Russian Revolution (1917 -1918), the World War I (1914-1918), the World War II (1939-1945) and the great depression of America (1930) was an event of great magnitude and significance that had far reaching political, social, cultural, religious and economic impacts on the Indian subcontinent. Therefore, Partition is one of the most tragic events in the entire Indian history, causing an unprecedented traumatic experience of physical suffering, pain of loss, pangs of separation, the feeling of disgust, and much more.

Partition often overshadows the importance of independence because of its much more direct impact on the lives of people. Virtually all fiction especially from northern India, whether written in English, Hindu, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali has, until recently, remained preoccupied with Partition. Poetry, song, cinema, story-telling within families constantly recall the sweet and bitter memories of pre-partition India and its aftermath.

For ordinary people, whose lives were devastated, Partition brought them irreparable sufferings. During Partition, most of people were totally deprived of their properties, homes, many lost their friends and relatives, many were witnesses, victims or perpetrators of unutterable atrocities or murders and ended up as refugees on one or the other side of the border. Leaving their native villages or towns, they found themselves in unknown surroundings. Still some feel torn from the

place they remembered as their home. Memory continues to take them to the traumatic experiences of the past. Partition had cast its evil impact on people who had to undergo innumerable sufferings and traumatic experiences which changed their psychology, their way of perception and their way of reacting to the traumatic situations. While writing about Partition, Gyanendra Pandey in his book *Remembering Partition : Violence , Nationalism, and History in India* (2001) writes , Partition was " … the event of the twentieth century , equivalent in terms of trauma to World War II for France and Japan" (Pandey 6).

To add to it, it is very important to know how people responded in the times of trauma. The word 'trauma' comes down from the Greek word *traumat* meaning wound. Lenore Terr, in her book *Too Scared to Cry: Psychic Trauma* (1990) writes "…psychic trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assaults the person from outside . Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind" (Terr 8). Traumatic events can include physical and sexual abuse, neglect, bullying, community based violence, disaster, terrorism, and war.

According to the Sigmund Freud, traumatic experiences are pushed into the unconscious so that they do not influence our daily lives but they emerge in other forms of symbolic expressions like gestures, sounds, facial expressions, writing, etc. Sigmund Freud in his book *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) writes that a human being "… reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without of course, knowing that he is repeating…He cannot escape from the compulsion to repeat; and in the end we understand that this is the way of remembering" (Freud 271) . Hence, language was the best weapon or a tool for the writers who had to undergo innumerable suffering and trauma during Partition. So, it is not only the 'facts' of any event that are important, but equally how people remember those facts, and how they represent them.

The present thesis, will analyze the select works of five major writers: Yaspal Sinha (1903-1976), Khushwant Singh (1915-2014), Amrita Pritam (1919-2005), Qurratulain Hyder (1927-2007), and Chaman Nahal (1927-) . The chief questions, the research propose to investigate are: How does Partition shape the psyche of a human being? What are the levels of suffering and trauma presented by the respective writers? Do people suffer because of others or by their own thoughts, desires and actions? Do people still suffer due to Partition?

In testing my hypothesis, I will compare and contrast the five respective novels such as Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950), Khushwant Singh's *Train To Pakistan* (1956), Yashpal Sinha's *Jootha Sach* (1958), Qurratulain Hyder's *Aag Ka Darya* (1959) and Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975) because these fictional works selected for the present study bring out vivid affects of Partition, but their treatment of theme and choice of characters, settings and styles differ. I will analyze each work in the context of spiritual suffering and trauma during Partition.

I would also like to look at the possibility of goodness present in these novels. The vast volume of partition fiction in English and in English translation is a faithful record of how human disaster has taken place during the gruesome period of Indian Partition. Simultaneously it also portrays the triumph of basic human values of some characters such as Juggut Singh and Iqbal in Khushwant Singh's *Train To Pakistan*, Lala Kanshi Rama and Barkat Ali Chowdhury in Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, Puro and Rasheed in Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* and others. The Bhagavad-Gita also begins with the theme of sorrow and ends with a positive note on the possibility of the end of suffering through self-realization. Therefore, amidst this pall of darkness and threats of insanity, there is always a ray of hope.

Key Terms

Partition: Partition is the act of dividing or partitioning; separation by the creation of a boundary that divides or keeps apart. 1947 Partition is the creation of two independent nations as India and Pakistan which is considered the most cataclysmic event in the history of twentieth century India. In the arts , literature , and cinema , Partition and its trauma have been the subject of many important works. From the perspective of the common man and woman, Partition is marked by large - scale violence, riots and movements of population especially in the north and east of India.

Trauma: It as a disorder state resulting either from an extremely distressing experience, which causes a severe emotional state, or form a physical injury to the body and such a state may have long lasting psychological effect. The 1947 Partition is one of the most traumatic events of the twentieth century. It is marked by sudden displacement, untold violent crimes including mass-rape and murder committed by all sides which resulted in trauma for millions of people.

Memory: Memory is the cognitive process whereby past experience is remembered. It has the power of retaining and recalling past experiences. Here the term would be used in the sense of how people remember Partition and how they represent it.

Background

"This stain-covered daybreak, this night-bitten dawn,
This is not that dawn of which there was expectation;
This is not that dawn with longing for…"

Poem "Subh-e-Aazaadii" by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, translated by V.G. Kiernan.

Partition theme has attracted the writers across the globe. Partition of India and the migration holocaust that followed have given fiction writers some monstrous, horrifying, pathetic and sensational topics around which to weave their stories. The vast volume of Partition fiction in English, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi and other languages of subcontinent faithfully records the gruesome human disaster in the wake of Partition.

Partition is always voiced and addressed by various writers, poets, painters, lyricists, genres of art which does not deal with history directly. The trauma left by Partition remains a major concern of Indian literature after independence. Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950), Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Yaspal Sinha's *Jootha Sach* (1958), Qurratulain Hyder's *Aag ka Darya* (1959) are some such examples that attempt to give us true insight into the sufferings and trauma experienced by human being during the time of Partition. The themes of trauma , sufferings, exile, of belonging and not belonging are common link among these writers. The writers chosen for the study have witnessed the horrific event of Partition. Thus the present thesis attempts to examine the human suffering and trauma during Partition and after Partition through the responses of the five writers.

Partition imposed ruptures on the land, by demarcating unsought for borderlines, by uprooting and displacing them , by tearing families and friends apart , by wounded memories which have turned into permanent scars , the indelible marks and reminders of trauma which is still fresh. 1947 was the year of freedom and independence but the overwhelming trauma of Partition is not cured yet. As Urvashi Butalia in *Other Side of Silence* (1998) remarks, "Partition could not so easily be put away …it was a 'division of hearts'. It brought untold sufferings, tragedy, trauma, pain and violence to communities who had hitherto lived together in some kind of social contract" (Butalia 8).

The works taken for the study look critically at the catastrophe and explore that how people suffered and had to go through horrific trauma of Partition. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), Cathy Caruth observes that it is crucial to remember Partition as a traumatic event that reaches beyond the historical fact of its occurrences and becomes most poignant. The writers taken for the study intervene history and the individual in a manner that allow to investigate Partition as a historical trauma.

Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950) deals with Partition. She is considered the first prominent woman Punjabi poet, novelist, and essayist. This novel portrays pain and sufferings of women who were used as pawns in the vendetta game during Partition and its traumatic impact on their psyche. It is a a story of a Hindu girl, Puro who has to get married to her own abductor, Rasheed who also suffers from guilt complex throughout the novel. The other characters as Kammo, Mad Woman, Lajjo have to suffer and go through Partition trauma.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) is one of the most well known among Partition novels. He won the Grove Press Award for *Train to Pakistan* as the best work of fiction in 1954. This novel is a tragic tale of human sufferings that how people fled from both sides of the border, how neighbours became enemies and it was certainly a traumatic experience for human being to

give up their belongings and rush to a land which was not theirs. At the same time, novelist also suggests that unblemished love is the greatest religion, and by adopting it we can save humanity from catastrophic events and annihilations.

Yashpal Sinha's massive novel *Jootha Sach* (1958) is originally written in Hindi and published in two volumes, the first volume was published in 1958 under the title *Vatan Aur Desh* and two years later the second volume *Desh Ka Bhavishya* was published. These two volumes are based on the events surrounding Partition of India and later translated into English entitled as *This Is Not That Dawn*. It narrates the event of Partition through the lives of people who suffered thousands death before they were actually torn away from their motherland to become *sharnarthis* . The story of their transformation from *sharnarthis* to *purusarthis* in the second volume is equally traumatic. So, this novel is a powerful tale of human suffering.

Qurratulain Hyder's *Aag Ka Darya* (1959) too deals with Partition and is originally written in Urdu and transcreated into English entitled as *River of Fire* (1999) by the novelist herself some forty years later. The story traces the trajectory of the Indian people from the Mauryan period to modern times. The novel deals with the trauma of Partition with the lives and experiences of those who were caught in the middle of the national divide and those who had unwillingly become subjects of violence.

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975), a Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel too deals with the theme of Partition. The novel is a deeply touching saga of Partition of the sub-continent and the accompanying disaster. As Chaman Nahal was a refugee, he writes with remarkable penetration and realism. The novel depicts in photographic detail the catastrophic episode that was enacted on the Indian soil immediately before and after Partition. The novel represents story of a whole

nation, of millions who were forced to leave their homes and to whom “azadi” brings only untold misery, sufferings and trauma.

Though the writers may differ in the treatment of their subject matter and in their choice of incidents but they all seem to insist that the division of the Punjab was done arbitrarily that the Hindus and Muslims could have lived in a united India with harmony. The novels are highly realistic in their depiction of Partition events. On the one hand they represent the inhuman aspect of Partition, on the other bring out the possibility of human goodness.

Partition led to wide spread massacre, rape, terror, arson, rioting, hostility, distrust, religious enmity, attacks and counter-attacks all of which is the subject matter of the literature pertaining to Partition. However, there is also another dominant theme running through this whole literature and that is the restoration of humanism and propagation of communal harmony between the two communities. Communal narrow-mindedness and religious fanaticism are deplored by most of the writers who vividly portray the evil consequences of religious intolerance. But their writings also reflect that human values are preserved by individuals in both the warring communities even in the midst of utter chaos, and that it is a ray of hope for people.

Review of Literature

Yusin, Jennifer. "The Silence of Partition: Border, Trauma and Partition." ***Social Semiotics*** **19. 4 (2009): 453-468. Web 27 July 2009. Print.**

1947 Partition is followed by physical pain, pangs of separation, pain of loss, etc. It has changed not merely the direction of the history but also moulded the psychology of people that leads to the trauma .This article is the study of the 1947 Partition, the most traumatic event of the history.

Caruth, Cathy, ed. ***Trauma: Exploration In Memory*****. John Hopkins University: Baltimore, 1995. Print.**

This book is an insightful study of traumatic events which are unbearable in their horror and intensity, they often exist as memories that are not immediately recognizable as truth. Such experiences are best understood not only through the straightforward acquisition of facts but through a process of discovering where and why conscious understanding and memory fail. Literature, according to Cathy Caruth opens a window on traumatic experience because it teaches readers to listen to what can be told only in indirect and surprising ways.

Jeffrey, Alexander. ***Trauma : A Social Theory*****. Polity Press: Cambridge . 2012. Print.**

This book offers a social theory of collective trauma. It explains how collective agency develops, or fails to develop, in response to the experience of social suffering, religion , nation, race , ethnicity , class and gender and each of these dimensions can be a medium for inflicting social pain. This book explores that what these sufferings are exactly, who delivered it and who was on the receiving end, the answers to these questions are not objectively known but established through trauma process.

Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence*. Penguin Books: New Delhi, 1998. Print.

Partition of India into two countries, India and Pakistan, caused one of the most massive human convulsions in history. Countless children disappeared, homes, villages, communities, families, and relationships were destroyed. Urvashi Butalia fills this gap by placing people and their individual experiences of human sufferings and trauma at the center of this epochal event.

Chopra, Vinod k. *Partition Stories: Mapping Community, Communalism and Gender.* New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2009. Print.

Partition literature poignantly captures the ravages of history on human hearts and lives; the unprecedented violence, uprooting, emotional scars, unresolved dilemmas and the colossal human waste. While the novels on the partition have won great acclaim, the short stories by writers of the sub-continent, cutting across linguistic, cultural, religious and national boundaries, have not received the critical attention they deserve.

The book offers a valuable study of short stories on Partition with sensitivity and insight into the human sufferings.

Research methods

The research methods would consist of close reading, interpreting and in-depth analysis of primary sources. Biographical and historical material will be used in order to establish the social and political scenario in which the writers wrote. Findings would be supported with a significant number of critical essays which deal specifically with the subject of trauma and Partition. Oral narratives, self- narratives which deal with the subject of aboriginal storytelling will also be studied. Thus approach will be interdisciplinary and will be supported by the theories.

Tentative Chapter Plan

1. **Introduction : Partition , Suffering, Trauma**

   The Partition of the Indian sub-continent is the most traumatic event in our recent history. Hence, Partition has left a deep scar on the psyche of the people. In the first chapter, I would focus upon the background of Partition and how people have to suffer and go through with horrific trauma of Partition. I would also focus upon the levels of suffering and trauma.

2. **The Study of *Pinjar* : Wounded Souls, Painful and Traumatic Journey of a Woman, Rape , Abduction**

   The second chapter would attempt to examine women's plight during Partition and how they are doubly marginalized by colonialism and patriarchy. It would also discuss about the female protagonist who challenges the patriarchy and make her own identity. This chapter would also focus upon the male protagonist who suffers from a guilt complex throughout the novel.

3. **The Study of *Train to Pakistan* : Trauma, Communal Hatred , Frustration , Sacrifice**

   This chapter proposes to analyse that how train becomes the symbol of despair, darkness and destruction. It would also analyse that how trauma leads to frustration, how friends become enemies and how people are forced to leave their home – land.

4. **The Study of *Jootha Sach* : Displacement , Searching for a New Identity**

   This chapter would study both the parts of the novel. The central focus would be on the psyche of people who had to leave their home and had to suffer in making a new identity

   It would also include the deep study of the psyche of characters and their traumatic journey to a unknown place.

5. **The Study of *Aag Ka Darya* : Peek into India's Past, Social Evils , Emotional Suffering and Trauma**

   This chapter would focus upon the river which is used as a metaphor and becomes the only witness of human suffering. It would also discuss that why writer does not talk about the physical violence and why she is more interested in the portrayal of emotional suffering and trauma.

6. **The Study of *Azadi* : A Painful Journey of Refugees , Rapes and Murders**

   This chapter would attempt to discuss the painful journey of the refugees, traumatic impact on the psyche and how they react when they leave their home during Partition or loss their relatives and friends.

7. **Conclusion:**

   The last chapter would conclude the brief study of these five novels in the context of suffering and trauma. It would also discuss that how Partition still relevance today and how people still suffer due to Partition.

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